DWELLINGS FOR THE WORKING CLASSES.

In directing our attention to the very important subject of the improvement of the dwellings of the labouring classes, we have had brought to our consideration many plans and propositions emanating from various quarters. The subject is one of surpassing interest to the philanthropist—to the political economist; but above all to the workmen themselves: nor can any section of society plead indifference to it, since so much of the general well-being in health, wealth, and morals, is dependent upon it.

We purpose to treat this section of building economy in a deliberate and careful manner, by reviewing what have been already done, and is now proposed to be done, by the various parties who have turned their attention to the subject; and since we know that a good deal of information lies yet beyond us, we will thank our various friends who can do so, to favour us with references and contributions that bear upon the question. There is at this present time a scheme on foot of a "Metropolitan Model Institution for improving the Dwellings of the Industrious Classes;" and when we consider how much the public were startled and shocked by the late disclosures of the condition of the workers in the mines and factories, and how powerfully the publication of the facts tended to rouse attention to the remedies, we think we cannot do better than quote from the prospectus of the "Model Institution," in reference to the condition of the dwellers and dwellings of the crowded districts in the metropolis and other large towns.

"The evidence produced before the Parliamentary Committee appointed to inquire into the Health of Towns, and appended to their valuable report of the year 1840, embodies a mass of information, connected with the domestic habits and dwellings of the poorer classes inhabiting the metropolis and other densely populated districts, which excites the most painful feelings in every benevolent heart.

"It appears from the above evidence that many districts tenanted by the industrious classes do not possess a single sewer, or any means of drainage. In numerous cases whole families, parents, sons, and grown-up daughters, and in some even two or three families, reside together, day and night in a single room. An eminent physician states, 'that in a room not more than seven feet long and six broad there were four women and two men sleeping every night.' Many of the statements given in evidence disclose the existence of a state of filth, disease, and demoralization, which is utterly unfit for general perusal, but it may be well to quote a portion of the evidence given by Dr. Southwood Smith, who is probably more fully acquainted with the state and condition of the lower classes of the metropolis than any other individual. Speaking of the evils the poor are liable to, and the pestilential places in which they are compelled to take up their abode, he says, 'They have no choice; they must live in what houses they can get nearest the places where they find employment; by no prudence or forethought on their part can they avoid the dreadful evils of this class to which they are thus exposed; no returns can shew the amount of suffering which they have had to endure from causes of this kind, during the last year (1839), but the present returns indicate some of the final results of that suffering; they shew that out of 77,000 persons who have received parochial relief from the Metropolitan Unions, 14,000 have been attacked with fever, one-fifth part of the whole, and that out of the 14,000 attacked, nearly 1,300 have died.' The Parliamentary Committee on the Health of Towns, in their report, state 'that in addition to the physical evils entailed upon the poorer classes by the state of their dwellings, it is impossible to deny, from the evidence before them, that their moral habits are affected by the same causes: that a constant residence in a tainted and polluted atmosphere, while it predisposes them to disease, and renders them less able to repel its attacks, also produces a degradation of moral character an indifference to the common decencies of life, and an utter recklessness of all those comforts which persons in their station might be expected to enjoy. The effect of this utter prostration of energy, and of all the better feelings of the mind, has been to reduce multitudes, who might otherwise have passed with credit through their humble spheres, to have recourse to ardent spirits as a desperate alleviation of their wretchedness;' and your Committee need hardly point out, how surely this irresistible temptation leads, step by step, to habitual dissipation and debauchery. It is but too certain that we have amongst us in this great metropolis sinks of corruption continually fostering and spreading abroad the seed of disease and death, both physical and moral, and it is hoped sufficient has been said to convince the most sceptical, that without a total change in the physical condition of the industrious classes, it will be in vain to expect much moral improvement. The causes of the evils at present operating upon the condition of these classes, then, appear to be, want of drainage, want of ventilation, want of proper provision for warmth, want of water, and the crowding together of numbers of persons of all ages and both sexes, in a manner utterly subversive of decency."

It is strange that this state of things should be, as it is, true, palpably and offensively true—obtruding itself upon the attention of every observer, and at every turn, in this crowded city—inquired into—reported upon—shown in its tendencies to lead to crime, disease, and the general impoverishment, and yet that nobody—no rigorous and influential body of men, sanctioned or unsanctioned by government, is seen to step forward, and with a determined hand to sweep out of the heart and vitals of this great city and others, these plague-spots, these pestilence-breeding Institutes—for such we may term them—that appear to be nourished, and cherished, and clung to, with a pertinacity that better things, and truly good things, fail to secure.

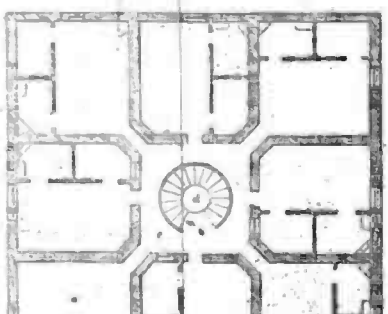
It were a curious question to determine how much per cent. in these profit-calculating times would be gained in the two-fold way of abating evil and promoting good, upon a plan of rooting out on the one hand, and improvement on the other. Put fifty for the one, and fifty for the other, and if cent. per cent. will not induce us with its usury, let us try to cast up the items of profit and loss, on the account of human suffering, misery, and degradation, that we debit ourselves with, and of ameliorating influences for which we may obtain credit.

Medical science has confessed itself at fault. We have before us now a number of the *Medical Times* which for its class makes that confession in full—"The scientific labours, the self-devotion of our medical brethren, have done nearly all that human powers can avail to do in detecting and combating death in every case where life is expugnable. The third duty—the duty, not theirs—but the duty of highest importance, viz. to *prevent disease*, has not yet been performed; and it becomes the necessitated office of our profession—still continuing its unfamed but noble mission of utility—to make known again and again to our rulers, the evils originating in the present system of public neglect of health, and to point out the best means by which this greatest of social boons—prevention of maladies—may be secured."

It is thus that this organ of the medical faculty speaks—calling upon us, whose province it is—and upon whom else should they call?—to take up this grand question at the point where they are compelled to abandon it—nay, rather, should we not feel such language as uttering a grave and solemn rebuke that we have not before done it—that we have not before arrested the progress of the fell destroyer—that we have evoked a power of medical science as if to be the mere hack to our blunderings! It is confirmed and avowed on all hands that our buildings, our miserable street speculations, our selfish, sordid scheming, as developed in alleys, galleries, and court-yards—our diving into the earth's bowels for caverns wherein to thrust poor humanity—our cooping up in dark and noisome tanks of tenements those of flesh and blood like ourselves—our undrained, unkennelled, black and hideous wynds, unfitted as receptacles for dogs, or viler beasts—these we cram thousands and hundreds of thousands of our fellow-beings into, out of sight and out of way, and then boast of our western squares and one or two main arterial streets—while dense and solid blocks, and ramifications of thinly-drawn inferior veins of coagulated evil breedings lie around and flow inwards at every turn.

But this must not continue—public attention is awakened, and it shall not be our fault if it be caught napping again. We shall receive and publish plans, and in the mean time we now insert one of Mr. London's that may have a limited range of applicability—and we subjoin his remarks from the supplement to his *Encyclopædia of Architecture*,

In the Encyclopædia (§ 493.), we have shown with what economy combinations of dwellings might be built, and how greatly the comforts of the individuals occupying them might, in various ways, be increased by co-operation. It does not appear, however, that mankind is yet in a fit state for entering on this stage in the progress of improvement. To be able to do so men must have been educated from infancy to live in society; and when this shall have been the case, then the increase of comforts and enjoyments that may be obtained by living together in masses will be duly appreciated by themselves. In the meantime, the working classes of society, in common with every other class, appear to us to have a much greater taste for isolation than for co-operation; more particularly in every thing relating to domestic arrangements. In short, we are inclined to think that little good will be effected by arrangements of this kind, till those classes for which they are intended, in consequence of superior education, see themselves the benefits which would accrue from them. They will then endeavour to procure their establishment.



2053

A College for single Working Men. The only addition that we shall make to what we have already advanced on this subject is a design, fig. 2053, taken from one which we made in 1819, and published in the *Mechanics' Magazine*, vol. xvi., for what may be called a college for single working men. Each floor will contain eight distinct dwellings, and each dwelling will consist of a living-room twenty-one feet by thirteen feet, *a*; sleeping-room, ten feet by seven, *b*; and washing-room, with a sink and water-closet, ten feet by seven, *c*; the circular stair is shown at *d*, and the landing to each floor at *e*. The building is supposed to be of a cubical form, of eight or ten stories high, with a staircase in the centre, and a series of fire-proof rooms on each floor, communicating with a common gallery.

The whole building we propose to be heated from one stove at the bottom of the stairs; and in each separate apartment might be placed two jets of gas for cooking, and one for lighting. As there would be a gas-meter to each apartment, no individual would pay for more gas than what he consumed. The floorings of all the rooms would be of flag-stones, the under side of which would form the ceiling to the room below; and as all the partitions would be of brickwork, or might also be of flag-stones, the first cost of the building would be comparatively low, and the expense of repair very trifling. On the lowest floor a house-keeper might reside, who would have the general charge of the building, and who, if it were thought advisable, might lay in a stock of such articles as were generally wanted by the occupants, and retail them to them at nearly cost price. There might also be a restaurateur and dining-room on the ground-floor, arranged so as to supply food on the most economical terms. The building, however, would be chiefly valuable as supplying lodgings of the most comfortable kind at a very moderate expense. As no fires would be wanted in the different rooms, there would be no occasion for fuel, which would be a great saving both of labour and expense; and as water would be laid on to every apartment, to which also there would be a water-closet for waste water, the labour of cleaning would be reduced to a mere trifle. In short, for large towns, there could hardly be a more economical and comfortable mode of lodging single men, such as clerks, shopmen, working mechanics and artisans of every description, and even literary men and artists.

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